

REMARKS

Entry of the foregoing amendment is respectfully requested. The Amendment is believed to place the application in condition for allowance and is, therefore, appropriate under Rule 116. The Amendment does not raise any new issues and, thus, does not require an additional search by the Examiner. The issues raised by the amended Claim 5 are the same issued raised by the presently pending Claims 5 and 6. Moreover, with Claims 7 and 8 being cancelled, issues at consideration are reduced.

The Amendment was not earlier presented because applicant did not appreciated all of the Examiner's reasons for rejection until they were repeated in the final Office Action.

By the present amendment, Claims 6-8 are canceled, and Claim 5 is amended.

Based on the foregoing amendments and the following remarks, the application is deemed to be in condition for allowance and action to that end is respectfully requested.

The Examiner rejected Claims 7 and 8 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Yano, et al., U.S. Patent No. 4,319,930 (Yano). Claims 5-6 were

rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Yano in view of Hodsden, U.S. Patent No. 3,938,214 (Hodsden).

It is respectfully submitted that Claim 5 is patentable over Yano and Hodsden whether taken alone or in combination. Specifically, Claim 5 recites the steps of (i) branching of step of portion of portion of a water flow, which circulates through a rinsing water circuit associated with each of the washer units, off in form of a bypass stream; (ii) and feeding the bypass stream to a washer unit located immediately upstream of a respective washer unit for additionally rinsing the metal strip in the immediately upstream washer unit with a rinsing water containing a smaller concentration of foreign additives than a rinsing water with which the metal strip is first treated in the immediately upstream washer unit; and (iii) dividing the bypass stream at an end of the immediately washer unit and feeding the divided water stream to locations above and below the metal strip.

According to the present invention, a single bypass steam is fed (through the bypass conduit 10) to the end of an immediately upstream washer unit and is there divided at the nozzle arrangement (11), with the divided water streams being fed to locations above and below a metal strip (through blast pipes 11a, 11b, Fig. 2).

In Yano, two bypass streams are branched from respective conduits (23, 24) in a downstream washer and are fed to separate single nozzles (41, 41'; 41, 42') in

the preceding washer unit located above and below the conveying belt (5). Yano does not disclose dividing a single bypass stream at an end of a preceding washer unit in two streams.

Hodsden likewise does not disclose the novel features of the present invention.

Since all claim limitations must be considered in an obviousness determination, and since the combination of Yano and Hodsden fails to disclose several of the important and recited elements and features of independent Claim 5, it is respectfully submitted the present invention, as defined by Claim 5, is not rendered obvious by the combination of Yano and Hodsden and is, therefore, patentably defines over said combination. It is respectfully submitted that Claim 5, as amended, is in condition for allowance.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that the application is in condition for allowances of the application is respectfully requested.

Should the Examiner require or consider it advisable that the specification, claims and/or drawings be further amended or corrected in formal respects, in order to place in condition for final allowance, then it is respectfully requested that

such amendment or correction be carried out by Examiner's amendment and the case passed to issue. Alternatively, should the Examiner feel that a personal discussion might be helpful in advancing this case to allowance, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned.

Respectfully Submitted,

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I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as first class mail and addressed to: Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450 on July 29, 2003.

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